

Marjorie Thompson has been selected as the 2016 Northwest Maricopa First Things First Champion for Young Children.

The award is given to local champions who actively volunteer their time to raise public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health. Champions spend a significant amount of time volunteering with FTF and building public awareness about the importance of early childhood issues.



Thompson engaged in awareness-raising efforts such as:

- Hosting training on early childhood messaging for parents and staff of the Airman & Family Readiness Center at Luke AFB.
- Providing early childhood information and resource materials while tabling the Kids Ride Safe event on Luke AFB.
- Facilitating the Bundles for Babies educational program for new and expecting parents on base where parents receive a care package for their baby as well as helpful literature and resources on the importance of a child's health and development, during the first 5 years.
- Providing FTF Family Resource Guides during "newcomer briefings" for new and transitioning military families twice a month.

We recently caught up with Thompson, who works as the Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Support Coordinator at Luke Airforce Base in Glendale, AZ.

**Question: Why do you feel early childhood development and health is so important?**

**Answer:** I feel both are important as every child needs to have a good start in life. Both from a developmental standpoint and also health. Making sure that each child gets a chance to development to their full potential is crucial. Parenting is not an automatic thing. Most parents only know what they read or from what they see other do, but really, they need to get expert advice if they are going to help their child be successful. The first years 0-5 is crucial in that development, and FTF is that organization that can help them in so many different ways.

**Q: What caused you to get involved in efforts to increase public awareness in early childhood issues?**

**A:** I have always felt public awareness is important in making early childhood issues key factors and do have family experience where I see awareness in parents taking action. However, two and half years ago, I switched jobs and began working with family with children and adults with various types of special needs. I immediately began to seek out organizations that work with families with special needs and organizations where I can refer families for assistance. Many of our families are young families with young children. Again FTF was one such organization that made a big difference to our Luke community on and off the base.

**Q: Why do you feel building awareness in early childhood and developmental health is so important for families and communities?**

**A:** Building awareness in early childhood and developmental health is so important for families and communities because the more healthy the communities are, the more healthy our children will be. Parents are made aware of early immunization for children, preschool, toddler information and a host of other early developments in the early years of children. Parents are made aware of the type of help that's available, not only for their children but all children. Early development and health will hopefully give the child a jump start in entering school.

**Q: How have you seen awareness for the early years change in your community?**

**A:** Just from talking with parents who got involved with early childhood programs such as FTF and hearing their stories on the improvements they have seen with their child/children. Early intervention also helps to make diagnosis so that treatment can begin before the child starts school is a big part of why early intervention is so crucial. Sharing of information is what makes programs such as FTF a huge success.

**Q: How do you suggest other people in your community get involved?**

**A:** Spread the word about helping agencies, such as FTF. Share your stories. Share how you have been helped. Be an advocate for others in your community. Tell a friend. Attend one of FTF event/activities. All these are ways to help people to get involved in our community.